

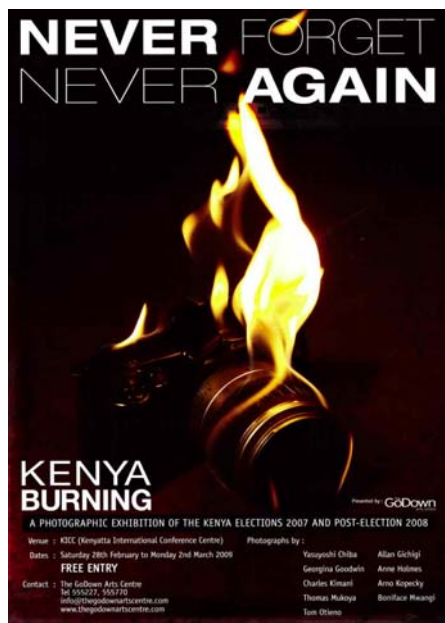


**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**KENYA**

## SUCCESS STORY

### Kenya Burning: Never Forget, Never Again



Graphic images at the Kenya Burning photography exhibition generated reflection on, and discussion about, the 2008 post-election violence.

*“Looking at the pictures, it’s almost as if all didn’t experience it. We have forgotten what we fought for. We need to pray and make smart choices in who we choose as leaders. People, please let’s change. We are one.”*

—Comment written by a visitor to the exhibition

**March 2009** – As February came to a close, Kenya marked the first anniversary of the National Peace Accord that drew the country away from the brink of civil war. Yet, as corruption scandals, a food crisis, and intra-party wrangling continue to dominate the headlines, many believe that Kenyans, including their political leaders, seem in a hurry to forget the past.

Activists at the GoDown Arts Center, however, felt that Kenya needed a public reflection on the key issues that sparked the violence in the early months of 2008. USAID’s Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) supported their efforts by funding a photo exhibition based on the book *Kenya Burning: Never Forget, Never Again*.

The book is a collection of photographs from Kenya’s contested December 2007 elections and the violence that followed. And while many objected to the graphic and disturbing photographs, the artists at GoDown believed that the explicit depictions would better generate discussions to help Kenyans understand what happened.

“Perhaps most people will agree that knowledge and reflection provided by the images are a prerequisite to healing,” said Joy Mboya, GoDown’s Executive Director. “The general feeling is that the book and exhibition need to be seen by as many people as possible because Kenya should never go down that path again.”

The book and photo exhibition have been widely publicized and reviewed in the local media. More than 3,000 people visited the exhibition during its first three days in Nairobi, and the exhibition will also travel to Mombasa, Kisumu, and Eldoret.

GoDown published an initial 1,500 copies of the book, while OTI has funded the production of an additional 3,000 copies that the arts center is distributing to key stakeholders, including all Members of Parliament, universities, libraries, and civil society leaders.

By raising awareness of the scale and nature of the violence, GoDown and OTI are working to increase dialogue, hasten reconciliation, and spur communities and leaders to work for reform. Above all, the effort seeks to encourage reflection and dissuade the violence and destruction that can erupt when ethnic differences are exploited for political gains.